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INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T ATHENS 001143

SIPDIS

FOR S/CT AMBASSADOR DELL DAILEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/06/2018
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: PERSONAL FROM AMBASSADOR SPECKHARD: RETAIN TERROR
GROUP N17 ON FTO LIST

REF: A. ATHENS 631
[B](#). ATHENS 250

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DANIEL SPECKHARD. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#). (U) Personal from Ambassador Speckhard to S/CT Dell Dailey.

[2](#). (S) BEGIN TEXT OF MESSAGE:

Dell:

I understand that the Greek terrorist group November 17 (N17) is being considered for removal from the Foreign Terrorist Organization list. I believe N17 may still retain the intent to engage in terrorist activity or terrorism, either directly or indirectly, and continues to be a potential threat to the security of U.S. nationals and facilities.

N17 has not claimed responsibility for any terrorists attacks during the five-year period under review, nor has there emerged actionable intelligence or physical evidence linking N17 to recent terror attacks. There is, however, a significant body of circumstantial evidence that leads us to be concerned about N17's ideological, personnel, and organizational links to other known terrorist groups, such as Revolutionary Struggle (RS) and the newly emerged People's Will, as well as the potential for its members to carry out future attacks. Firstly, not all members of N17 are behind bars. In 2002, 19 members were arrested. Of those, 15 were convicted and four acquitted. Greece recently released two of the convicted members after an appeals court reduced their

sentences to time-served. Others are appealing their convictions, many will be out of jail soon, and some N17 members were never apprehended and remain at-large. Secondly, none have expressed any change in the views or intentions they held prior to their convictions, and we remain concerned about their potential to commit further terrorist acts. The de-listing of N17 could prompt the remnants of the organization to undertake attacks against U.S. or foreign targets to demonstrate the continued viability of their cause.

Thirdly, since the organization emerged in 1975, it has often had periods of five years or longer between attacks on Americans. The imprisoned, released, and at-large members of N17 maintain, at a minimum, ideological links to current terrorist organizations, such as Revolutionary Struggle, which has claimed responsibility for many recent terror attacks, including the January 2007 RPG attack on Embassy Athens. Beyond ideological links, the modus operandi of the newer organizations is very similar to the methods of N17, suggesting close ties. Indeed, Greek terrorists -- some identified with specific organizations, some not -- carried out attacks on the police and courts on the days of major court appearances of N17 suspects and explicitly identified

those attacks as acts of solidarity with imprisoned N17 members. The first terrorist action claimed by RS was an IED attack in September 2003 against the Athens court complex where the N17 trials were taking place. Within the last month, the newly emerged People's Will committed two bombings and claimed responsibility for an attack in Larissa in 2004 during the planned transfer there of N17 felons. Just prior to one of the recent People's Will bombings, imprisoned N17 hitman Koufondinas had called on N17 members not to give up the fight.

Removal of N17 from the FTO List also would be a major blow to counterterrorism cooperation and would undermine on-going law-enforcement efforts. The FBI and Greek authorities continue active investigations of N17. Both the FBI Washington field office, which is responsible for the N17 investigation, and the U.S. Federal prosecutor assigned to the N17 prosecution are opposed to de-listing N17 because of the potential impact on the investigation and prosecution, including several pending indictments. De-listing N17 could also undermine investigations and prosecutions by Greek authorities by sending a signal that the U.S. no longer regards N17 as a threat or worthy of further effort or concern.

N17 was responsible for the murders of at least 23 Greek and foreign officials, including four Americans and one Greek employee of Embassy Athens, over a period of three decades -- with sometimes long periods between attacks. I remain deeply concerned about its intent for further terrorist actions and urge that it not be removed from the FTO List.

Best regards,
Dan

SPECKHARD